

My Impressions of the Centenary Celebrations of the Allahabad High Court

By THE HON'BLE MR. K. N. WANCHOO,

Chief Justice of India

As a former Judge of the Allahabad High Court, which is the fourth oldest High Court in the Country, having been established only a few years after the Calcutta, Bombay and Madras High Courts, I had occasion to participate in the Centenary celebrations which took place from the 25th of November to 27th of November, 1966. To commemorate this event, a special Postal Stamp was issued by the Posts and Telegraphs Department and released on the morning of 25th November. There was a seminar the same morning which I could not attend as I arrived too late for that.

The main function took place on the afternoon of that day. The President of India presided at the inauguration. The proceedings began with a procession of Judges of the Allahabad High Court at 2.45 p. m. I joined this procession along with my colleague, Justice V. Bhargava of the Supreme Court. The then Chief Justice of India, Sri Subbarao, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh and the President also joined the procession. The Judges of the Allahabad High Court were in their red robes and presented a colourful picture. At 2.50 p. m., Jana Gana Mana was sung, and then all of us sat down on our allotted seats on the dais.

The first speech was delivered by the Chief Justice of the High Court welcoming the President and other distinguished guests. This was followed by a speech by the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. Thereafter came the speech of the then Chief Justice of India. Finally, there was the inaugural address by the then President Sri S. Radhakrishnan in his usual inimitable style. The Chief Justice of the High Court then thanked the President, and Mr. K. L. Misra, Advocate-General, U. P., made a short speech. The first part of the inauguration came to an end with the departure of the President at 4.15 p. m. followed by a short break.

The Centenary Celebrations were attended by a number of distinguished guests from various courts of foreign countries. Amongst them were the Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Malaysia, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nepal and the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court of the U. S. S. R. Speeches were made by these distinguished guests. The speech of the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Court of U. S. S. R. was particularly appreciated.

Several High Courts of India were also represented at the celebrations. The Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court and the Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir were themselves present. The Presidents of the Orissa High Court Bar Association and the Avadh Bar Association also came to join the celebrations. The then Law Minister of the Government of India, Sri G. S. Pathak, who was an eminent Advocate of the Allahabad High Court, was also present and joined the others in wishing well to High Court for the future.

The Presidents of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association and the Avadh Bar Association also joined in paying tributes to the Allahabad High Court. The proceedings were wound up by Sri K. L. Misra, Advocate-General, Uttar Pradesh, who thanked the guests. The National Anthem was then played and the function was over at 6 p. m. It was a most impressive ceremony; and rich tributes were paid by all those who spoke of the great Judges and Lawyers who, in the past one hundred years, had contributed to make the Allahabad High Court the great temple of Justice which it has come to be.

The next day's celebrations began at 9.15 a. m. As on the previous day, the proceedings began with a procession of Judges of the Allahabad High Court which was also joined by me and my colleague Mr. Justice V. Bhargava and the then Chief Justice of India. After Jana Gana Mana had been played, the members of the procession took their seats on the dais. The Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court requested the Chief Justice of India to open the Exhibition. Justice S. N. Katju of the Allahabad High Court then made a speech referring to what the Exhibition was meant for. The Chief Justice of India then made a suitable reply and the Advocate-General of Uttar Pradesh thanked the Chief Justice of India and other guests including the foreign dignitaries. We all then went up to the Copying Department on the first floor of the High Court where the Exhibition was held. The Chief Justice of India formally cut the tape and all then went in to see the Exhibition. It had an impressive display of portraits of all the Judges of the High Court (so far as available) in the last one hundred years. Besides, there were old documents and records of the High Court. We also saw some of the old judgments written in the hand of former Judges (at a time when there was no shorthand). One was reminded forcibly of the fact that these judgments were short and to the point bringing out pithily the facts and the law, a virtue which unfortunately seems to be lost in these days of shorthand typing. A pleasant two hours was spent at this function and the guests were presented with the Commemoration Volume at the end.

The same afternoon there was a Garden Party which was attended by all the guests, the members of the Bar and the members of the Staff of the High Court. It was a pleasant function. It was followed the same evening at 6.30 p. m. by a cultural programme of an hour and a half which was much appreciated by all those present.

The third day's function began at 9.30 a. m. It was held for the purpose of unveiling the portrait of that great Judge, Syed Mahmood. The Advocate-General, Uttar Pradesh, and the Chief Justice of the High Court spoke of the great qualities of Justice Mahmood and requested the Chief Justice of India to unveil the portrait. The Chief Justice of India made a suitable reply highlighting the qualities of Justice Mahmood and unveiled the portrait to the sound of thunderous clapping by those present.

This was immediately followed by another function. While the High Court completed its hundred years, the building in which it is housed completed its 50 years. Thus the Golden Jubilee of the building coincided with the Centenary of the High Court. To commemorate this, a Tablet was fixed in the main entrance of the building. The Chief Justice of the High Court requested the Chief Justice of India to unveil the Tablet. Dr. K. N. Katju, one of the eminent Advocates of the High Court, also spoke on the occasion, giving some of his reminiscences. The Chief Justice of India made a suitable reply and unveiled the Tablet. The proceedings

came to an end with a speech of thanks by Pandit Gopinath Kunzru, one of the senior most Advocates in the High Court.

In the afternoon, there was a Seminar from 2 p. m. to 4 p. m. This was followed by a Drama from 6 p. m. for two hour and a half. The celebrations came to an end thereafter with a closing speech by the Chief Justice of the High Court. .

The celebrations were a great success. The arrangements went without a hitch and, for this, thanks are due to Justice S. N. Katju and his band of workers from the staff of the High Court.

The Centenary closed one chapter in the history of the High Court of Allahabad. During these hundred years, the High Court has produced a great galaxy of Judges and Lawyers. I cannot refrain from mentioning some before I end. Among the Judges, I may mention Sir Walter Morgan, the first Chief Justice, Sir John Edge, Mr. Justice Mahmood, Sir Pramoda Charan Banerji, Sir Lal Gopal Mukerji and Sir Shah Mohammad Sulaiman. Among lawyers I may mention the names of Pandit Ajudhia Nath, Sri Jogendranath Chaudhri. Sir Sunder Lal. Pandit Motilal Nehru. Dr. Satish Chandra Banerji. Sir Charles Ross- Alston. Mr. B. E. O'Conor. Dr.Surendranath Sen. Sri Pearey Lal Banerji and last but not the least Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru.

I am not naming living Judges and Advocates though there are some great names among them also. These have shed lustre on the Allahabad High Court and formed its glorious traditions. Today. the Allahabad High Court is the largest Court in India with about forty Judges and dispenses justice in a State with a population of about seven crores. It is my prayer that this great Court will maintain its traditions and will achieve even greater heights as a temple of Justice. I have no doubts about this.